

Message Text

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SUBJECT: LEOPARD VERSUS XM-1 TANK EVALUATION

REFS: A. STATE 066347 DTG 182353Z MAR

--- B. LONDON 10203 DTG 301708Z JUN (NOTAL)

1. AS REQUESTED REF B, THIS MESSAGE PROVIDES GUIDANCE FOR
PRESS QUERIES TO ALL ADDRESSEES CONCERNING THE FORTHCOMING
XM-1/LEOPARD TANK EVALUATION.

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2. REF A RESPONDS TO A SIMILAR REQUEST FOR GUIDANCE FROM USMISSION NATO, AND INCLUDES THE TEXT OF A LETTER FROM SECRETARY OF DEFENSE TO SENATOR EAGLETON ON THE SUBJECT. IN HANDLING PRESS QUERIES, RECOMMEND YOU DRAW ON REF A AS WELL AS THE FOLLOWING:

3. YOU SHOULD "STRESS THAT THE US IS GENUINELY INTERESTED IN ENHANCING THE COMBAT EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ALLIANCE THROUGH ADOPTION OF STANDARD WEAPON SYSTEMS. DURING THE PAST YEAR, WE HAVE INTENSIFIED EFFORTS IN THIS AREA. THE XM-1/LEOPARD COMPARATIVE EVALUATION IS ONE OF MANY PROJECTS WE ARE PURSUING WITH OUR ALLIES TO DEVELOP COMMON WEAPON SYSTEMS.

4. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT OUR ALLIES NOT CONSIDER THIS COMPARATIVE EVALUATION A CONCLUSIVE TEST CASE FOR STANDARDIZATION: ITS ORIGINS DATE BACK MORE THAN A DECADE WHEN THE US AND THE FRG INITIATED THE MBT-70 PROGRAM WHICH WAS EVENTUALLY CANCELLED DUE TO DIFFICULTY AND EXPENSE OF SATISFYING DIFFERING NATIONAL REQUIREMENTS IN A COMMON TANK. THE XM-1 AND LEOPARD 2 TANK DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS THEN PROCEEDED SEPARATELY; AND THE 1974 US/FRG MOU ON TANK STANDARDIZATION OPENED THE OPTION OF POSSIBLE US ADOPTION OF THE LEOPARD 2 WITHOUT COMMITTING OUR TWO COUNTRIES TO A COMMON TANK. THEREFORE, WHILE THIS AGREEMENT MAY PROMOTE NATO STANDARDIZATION, IT WAS NOT SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED FOR THAT PURPOSE.

5. US OFFICIALS SHOULD NOT SPECULATE PUBLICLY ON THE OUTCOME OF THE FORTHCOMING EVALUATION AND SHOULD PROMPTLY CORRECT ANY MISAPPREHENSIONS THAT THE TESTS WILL NOT BE COMPLETELY FAIR. THE US ARMY WANTS THE BEST TANK, AND IF THE LEOPARD PROVES TO BE CLEARLY SUPERIOR, CONSIDERING BOTH COST AND PERFORMANCE, DOD WILL RECOMMEND ADOPTING IT FOR US MANUFACTURE. FRG AND UK OBSERVERS AT ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND -- WHO ARE NOW WITNESSING THE COMPETITION BETWEEN THE TWO US PROTOTYPES -- WILL BE ABLE TO ATTEST TO THE OBJECTIVITY OF THE ARMY XM-1 LEOPARD TANK EVALUATIONS.

6. LATER THIS MONTH, THE US ARMY WILL AWARD A CONTRACT TO CHRYSLER OR GENERAL MOTORS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF ELEVEN ADDITIONAL OFFICIAL USE

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TIONAL PROTOTYPES. IF ANNOUNCEMENT OF THIS CONTRACT STIMULATES DOUBTS CONCERNING THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE US IN CONSIDERING THE LEOPARD, YOU MAY ADVISE QUESTIONERS THAT THE FRG WAS UNABLE TO DELIVER THE LEOPARD IN JANUARY 1976 TO BE TESTED ALONG WITH THE US PROTOTYPES. THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE DECIDED NOT TO RISK A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN TANK PROGRAM COSTS BY DELAYING XM-1 PROTOTYPE DEVELOPMENT. THE CONTRACT INCLUDES A PROGRAM TERMINATION CLAUSE IN THE EVENT

THAT THE ARMY SELECTS THE LEOPARD IN MARCH 1977.

7. US OFFICIALS SHOULD STRESS THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE TANK HARMONIZATION PROGRAM. THE US AND THE FRG HAVE EM- BARKED ON A COOPERATIVE EFFORT THAT HAS ALREADY RESULTED IN EXCELLENT TANK CONCEPTS FOR BOTH COUNTRIES. RECENTLY, SENIOR LEVEL EXPERTS FROM THE US AND THE FRG BEGAN INTEN- SIVE DISCUSSIONS ON HOW THEIR TANK DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS CAN MAXIMIZE STANDARDIZATION, COMMONALITY AND INTEROPERA- BILITY. ON JULY 2, SECRETARY RUMSFELD AND MOD LEBER MET TO DISCUSS THIS ISSUE. FOLLOWING PRESS STATEMENT WAS RE- LEASED SUBSEQUENT TO THIS MEETING:

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED: QTE:

DURING THEIR MEETING TODAY, MINISTER OF DEFENSE GEORGE LEBER AND SECRETARY OF DEFENSE DONALD RUMSFELD REVIEWED PRO- GRESS IN IMPROVING THE STANDARDIZATION AND INTEROPERABIL- ITY OF ALLIANCE WEAPON SYSTEMS. THE SECRETARY AND THE MINISTER NOTED IN PARTICULAR THE IMPORTANCE IN THIS REGARD OF THE ALLIANCE'S ARMORED FORCES.

THEY RECALLED THEIR EARLIER DISCUSSIONS ON THIS THEME IN BRUSSELS LAST MONTH DURING THE NATO DPC MINISTERIAL MEET- INGS. THEY APPRAISED THE RESULTS OF VERY RECENT, INTEN- SIVE DISCUSSIONS AMONG THEIR SENIOR LEVEL EXPERTS ON WAYS IN WHICH PROGRAMS FOR TANK DEVELOPMENT COULD MAXIMIMZE STANDARDIZATION, COMMONALITY AND INTEROPERABILITY. THEY WERE PLEASED WITH THE PROGRESS ALREADY ACHIEVED IN THESE DISCUSSIONS AND ISSUED INSTRUCTIONS TO THEIR SENIOR LEVEL EXPERTS TO CONTINUE THEIR EFFORTS TOWARD THESE GOALS.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD AND MINISTER LEBER AGREED THAT BECAUSE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS WORK FOR THE ALLIANCE, THEY WOULD REACH AGREEMENT ON DEFINITIZED OBJECTIVES WITHIN THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS END QTE END UNCLASSIFIED

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